

Promoting Joint Attention

The development of joint attention can be delayed in individuals with social communication difficulties, yet it plays a key role in developing nonverbal skills and sharing attention and for requesting social communication and interactions. Most of the ideas below focus on supporting children who are at the beginning stages of joint attention

Activities that may Support Development of Joint Attention

- Looking in a mirror putting on a hat and pulling funny faces.
- Sit opposite child both have a straw, place a feather in between you and blow between the two of you.
- Noisy or moving toy such as a bumble ball/ singing soft toy place it under a small sheet/ scarf and say “where’s the ball” in an excited manner helping the child to pull the scarf off.
- Blow bubbles
- A wrapping paper tube pom, poms, small balls or cars hold the ball at the top say ready steady go and roll down the tube.
- Hold a small blanket between yourself and the child put a ball/ bean bag or soft toy on top and say ready steady go on go quickly lift the blanket and make the toy fly into the air.
- Have a bright hand/ finger puppet dance it around a get the child’s attention then hide it behind your back/ in your palm and say “where’s....?” when the child looks quickly jump the puppet up and say “Here I am”/ “Boo”/ “Hello”
- Blow up a balloon in front of the child and hold it expectantly in front of you/ and the child looking between child and balloon. Release the balloon to support the child to look toward where it has gone, walk in an exaggerated manner pointing to where it is and enthusiastically retrieve it. Repeat the process.
- Put scarves or ribbons in a large tin with a lid and hole cut out, pull, and keep pulling shifting visual attention between child and scarves with puzzled expressions or imitating child expressions.
- Have a large bowl/ tray of water in front of you, throw water-filled balloons into the tray with exaggerated body movements and expressions. Hold the balloon before throwing looking between the water/balloon and the child.
- Fill squeeze bottles with water and hold them in front of you directed upwards/ toward the floor (or tin tray to create more noise) pause as above then squeeze with exaggerated gestures.
- In a darkened room, use a torch to shine on items around the room

Toys that may Motivate Joint Attention



Useful References and Links

<https://www.cheapdisabilityaids.co.uk/early-years-sensory-toys-79-c.asp>

<https://www.sensorytoywarehouse.com/>